

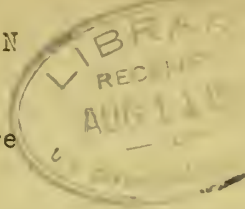
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Farm Labor Campaign

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WOMEN'S LAND BRIGADES IN CANADA

Farmers in Canada, as in the United States, have been troubled by labor shortages since the opening of World War II. It has been estimated that between January 1, 1940, and March 15, 1942, 18 percent of the male farm workers were lost to industry and the armed forces. 1/

In Canada the province of Ontario has taken the most effective action to meet farm labor difficulties. Aroused by the prospective decrease of farm labor and by the need for increased agricultural production, the Farm Training Branch of the Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program began to consider the farm labor problem in the spring of 1940. From two to three thousand secondary school youths were placed on farms in July and August. That autumn the Ontario government appointed an interdepartmental committee on Farm Labor Service, made up of the provincial ministers of Labor (Chairman), Education, and Agriculture. The Dominion Department of Labor financed the plan. The cooperation of churches, YMCA, YWCA, boards of education, teachers, and other groups was requested. An appeal was made for registration of prospective farm workers in an organization to be known as the Ontario Farm Service Force, a name similar to that of the Canadian Active Service Force, the Dominion's overseas military body. The appeal was that of patriotic national service.

Registration for the Farm Service Force was open to everyone 12 or more years of age engaged in food production on the farm -- including family members and hired laborers -- and to any nonfarm people who might volunteer to help farmers. The registrants were known as Farm Service Volunteers. All boys under 15 and girls under 16 were required to work at home or on farms chosen by their parents and under their close supervision.

In Canada public recognition of the value of the services of Farm Volunteers is given through: (a) Presentation to each registrant of an official crest, motto and flag and a copy of the code of the Farm Service Force; (b) presentation of dress uniforms with shoulder, sleeve, and hat badges; (c) the use of work uniforms of blue overalls, white blouse, and red bandana; (d) the presentation of chevrons worn on the sleeve of the dress uniform for service of 6 or more months; and (e) presentation of certificates of achievement at public meetings after the completion of the crop season.

1/ Canada, Department of Agriculture, Farm Labor in Wartime, by B. A. Campbell and J. Coke, Ottawa, July 1942.

(From mimeographed circular, Wartime Use of Women in Agriculture, issued by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA.)

DISTRIBUTION - Sent to extension editors for primary information use in the States; and to War Boards and others for their information; coverage-all States.
USE - Adaptation and use in news and feature stories, on radio, house organs, visual aids, etc., and as background information for writers.

In 1941 Volunteers were grouped into seven brigades, as follows:

1. Farmerette Brigade - for fruit, vegetable and truck farming; made up of young nonfarm women, students 16 years of age or older, and school teachers.
2. Women's Land Brigade - for all-year work on general, livestock, poultry, and dairy farms.
3. Farm Cadet Brigade - for seasonal work on mixed and dairy farms; composed of young men 15 years old and up to military age, also of older men rejected for military service.
4. Boys of the Old Brigade - for year-round or seasonal work on dairy and general farms; composed of retired farmers or farm hands, middle aged and older men.
5. Holiday Service Brigade - composed of part-time workers divided into three groups:
 - (a) Persons who spend a week or more of summer vacations helping farmers, particularly in haying, threshing, silo filling, potato and other harvest operations.
 - (b) Workers at other occupations who give a day a week to help nearby farmers in harvest time.
 - (c) Store people who close stores and go to help harvest.
6. Children's Brigade - made up of those under 16 years of age who take part on their parents' or nearby farms, in work such as berry picking, hoeing, weeding, and gardening.
7. Farm Girls' Brigade - composed of young farm women not in school and up to 26 years old, who do farm work.

The first two brigades thus include nonfarm members and may be considered as the two sections of a women's land army.

In 1942 the "Boys of the Old Brigade" was replaced by a new group, the Farm Commandos, enrolling all who, unable to leave home, were willing to give their spare time to help a nearby farmer. In 1942, 12,750 men and women gave service under this Brigade, which will be expanded in 1943.

A field force of placement officers - one in every 3 counties of the province - was organized to secure farmers' applications for labor, to investigate the farmer applicants and their homes, to make placements, to keep in touch with the young people placed, and to adjust difficulties relating to working conditions and wages.

The statistics available do not give placements by brigades, but show that out of 23,041 placements made on Ontario farms in 1941-42 fully one-third (7,940) were those of women and girls. These do not include the hundreds of day or vacation workers who helped farmers. In 1942 total placements, from April 1 to November 23, through the Ontario Farm Service Force numbered 54,405. Of these 10,213 were under the auspices of the Farmerette Brigade, 2,565 under those of the Women's Land Brigade, and 902 under those of the Farm Girls' Brigade, a total of 13,680 placements of women. 1/

To increase the number of enlistments among secondary school students, arrangements were made to permit them to leave school in April provided that they had maintained certain attendance and scholarship standards, and provided that they would work on farms for at least 13 weeks.

In intensive fruit and vegetable areas labor needs were met in large part by means of camps established by the government. In 1941 there were 11 of these in Ontario; in 1942 there were 16 camps for girls, with a total capacity of 996, from which 2,303 placements were made, and 4 camps for boys, with a total capacity of 201, out of which 260 placements were made. An additional 680 women were placed in Women's Land Brigade camps.

Early in the season, in an area in which a camp is thought to be needed, farmers are called to a meeting. There the labor requirements, wage rates and working conditions in the area are discussed. Growers fill out forms showing their labor needs. The placement officers and a local committee review them and decide when the camp should open and the number of workers it should accommodate. Minimum hourly rates of pay are agreed upon, also hours of work. A committee to help run the camp is elected.

Each of these camps has a staff made up of a director, an assistant director, and three camp assistants. Supervision, recreation, and discipline are usually under the direction of YWCA workers. An Ontario Farm Service placement officer and a labor secretary have the responsibility of seeing that each camp member has as full employment as possible. Farmers are required to contribute 10 cents per day per worker hired to an Unemployment Insurance Fund, out of which part of the board bill of those who are unable to get 32 hours of work per week is met.

The Ontario Farm Service Force has asked for six additional camps for girls in 1943 and is discussing the advisability of camps for boys in ten additional areas.

1/ Ontario Farm Service, Report of Activities for 1942, page 5.

